

Black Fragility and How it Operates Through The Black American Experience

By Luis Albert Rosales

Black fragility is a common feeling for some black Americans, primarily activists when they are faced with the challenges of discussing racial dynamics outside of the United States. In their focused knowledge of African American studies or black American history, they fortify their concept of race in some of their shared history. Since the turn of the century, the black American movement has gotten much support as opposed to the centuries before. After cases like Tamir Rice and others, there is merit for change. As black American culture evolves and grows and expands on the history that focuses on their blackness, they likely fall into a conditional cycle of fragility.

Black fragility operates behind a strong collective wall of blackness. Unique in the individual, they retort and exclaim or shame someone; however, some accept the tension between them—the fragility they share. How can you face others who look like you or have had a different history and say that their racial perspectives should be isolated within the radius of American blackness? The sense of collective priority can be felt in black American efforts, yet they will defend the racial structures established by early Americans. A dilemma that must be remedied, yet it cannot.

Black Americans may collectively share their grievances when challenged. The mere idea of black fragility is met with disdain and racial-cultural exclusivity. For example, if they discuss racial dynamics with a Haitian or a Hispano, these Latinos would have a different perspective on racial dynamics. A black American would react defensively or dismissively towards their views on racial dynamics due to their perspective that they are foreigners; which may not be the case for many. As they undermine them as foreigners, they also undermine them on a racial level.

For biracial or mixed people, it can often be difficult to reason with an activist-minded black American who internalizes opposition to their racial views as upholding white supremacy—the American flavor that one must submit to. They would rather them renounce their racial concepts and submit to the orthodoxy of blackness—American blackness. Collective racial unity often drives them to racial-cultural exclusivity that alienates other dark-skinned people.

Light-skinned people or white people are easily dismissed in these discussions in the eyes of black American activists because they do not have the attributes of a “typical black American”, which is incredibly subjective. Their black fragility contributes to the alienation of entire groups of people including biracial and mixed people.

Unconvinced, the Haitian and the Hispano may persist in their views, but the black American activist may fall further into black fragility. Blackness is the primary manifestation of black culture in the United States and it must be preserved under a black American society, so they assert. Pressuring the

two, the black American activist will press forward in their view that foundational black American society must be preserved and the racial structures they adopted be with it. By being “foundational black Americans”, they assert they hold authority over the black identity within the United States; they claim the identity of blackness. Protectionism can grow strongly among black American activists and it further leads to division. Xenophobic and accusatory reactions may come against migrants and people of minority cultures due to their subjectivity. The black American activist, in their fragility, may dissuade them both from their identity in an attempt for unity.

In the likelihood of engaging with someone who is a multi-generational black American who disagrees with their racial concepts, such as a biracial American, they question their allegiances. To be black in America is to be a member of their society; they assert their authority and social orthodoxy among other black Americans. Biracial and other mixed families feel ostracized as a result of the black fragility expressed in black American activist circles.

Black fragility forms and evolves as discussions expand with migrants coming to the United States. During our time to reconcile past issues, we live in a time when black fragility accelerates. In this acceleration, black fragility will operate aggressively. The dilemma between social acceptance, black fragility, and racism will blur the lines as ethnocentrism will take center stage. Black fragility will operate and evolve among these changes. Black American activists will continue exposing their fragility as they reveal themselves to different racial ideas outside of their foundational black American ideals. The concept of living under the “black American experience” will change. The fragility shared among American activists to preserve foundational black American concepts will be challenged by Latino and Hispano migrants, who too share their views on race and racial dynamics.

Black fragility operates out of the fear that stems from this identity change. Will foundational black American concepts be preserved? Will the concepts be respected? Will they be challenged and will they evolve? Fear is what drives the xenophobic tendencies of black fragility. How does black fragility operate? Black fragility operates through the black American experience under the guise of authority and fear of ethnicities within the orthodoxy of blackness.